

The Facebook Post That Led Ted Cruz to Sack His Communications Director

Monday afternoon, while campaigning in Nevada, presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) announced he had asked his communications director to resign.

The firing was prompted by a Facebook post Rick Tyler, senior communications advisor to the Cruz for President campaign, made Sunday. It showed an interaction between Cruz' father and a Cruz staffer with U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), another GOP presidential candidate.

The Cruz staffer was reading from the Bible. In one version of the video—the one shared by Tyler—the Florida senator is transcribed to have said “not many answers in it” in reference to the Bible. That version of the transcript, reportedly from a Pennsylvania college newspaper, had already been disputed prior to Tyler sharing it.

In the meantime, Rubio's communications director, Alex Conant, shared a version of the video with the correct transcribed conversation. Conant is visible in the video, walking about three feet behind Rubio during the exchange.

Rubio himself explained to reporters Monday that he was saying the Book of Proverbs is especially helpful.

“I know exactly what I said to that young man. I said, ‘The answer to every question you'll ever have is in that book,’ and then I pointed to the Book of Proverbs, which he was reading, and then I said ‘Particularly that one,’” he said.

Sunday afternoon, the Cruz staffer came to Rubio's defense, prompting Tyler's eventual apology shortly after midnight

Central Time.

"I want to apologize to Senator Marco Rubio for posting an inaccurate story about him here earlier today," he said. "The story showed a video of the Senator walking past a Ted Cruz staffer seated in the lobby of a hotel reading his Bible. The story misquoted a remark the Senator made to the staffer. I assumed wrongly that the story was correct. According to the Cruz staffer, the Senator made a friendly and appropriate remark. Since the audio was unclear, I should not have assumed the story was correct. I've deleted the post because I would not knowingly post a false story. But the fact remains that I did post it when I should have checked its accuracy first. I regret the mistake."

He appeared on FOX News Channel on Monday morning to repeat his apology. He abruptly left MSNBC's studio prior to repeating the apology for that cable news network, but no explanation was given.

Rubio said Monday he accepts Tyler's apology, but called for the Cruz campaign to hold someone accountable.

"It's every single day, something comes out of the Cruz campaign that's deceptive and untrue, and in this case goes after my faith," he said. "So I understand, I guess one of their spokespersons apologized and I'll accept his apology, but this is a pattern now and I think we're now at a point where we start asking about accountability."

Cruz was later asked about the matter while campaigning in Nevada, and made a statement for the reporters who were following him.

"I have spent the morning investigating what happened. This morning, I asked for Rick Tyler's resignation. I had made clear in this campaign that we will conduct this campaign with the very highest standards of integrity. That is how we have conducted it from day one," he said. "This was a grave error

of judgment. It turned out the news story he sent around was false but I'll tell you, even if it was true, we are not a campaign that is going to question the faith of another candidate."

Tyler was one of the Cruz campaign's first hires. He was a long-time communications specialist for former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. His name was also connected to concerns over the spreading of a false rumor that Dr. Ben Carson would be dropping out of the race following the Iowa Caucus.

The issue bled over into the New Hampshire Primary and into the first few days of campaigning in South Carolina. Addressing the media Monday, Cruz turned the tables by personally accusing Rubio's campaign of using the Facebook post to distract voters from questions about Rubio's record.

"They have a long record they've earned from South Carolina of engaging in this kind of trickery and impugning the integrity of whomever their opponent is to distract the attention," he said. "We are going to stay focused on issues, and substance, and record, because I think that is what the American people want. I think that's what they deserve, and that's what they're going to get. This campaign is about turning this country around, bringing back jobs and economic growth, and protecting the constitutional rights of Americans."